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The wearing of ear-rings is supposed to help a child to live, as giving it something extra to hold on to. 852 782

Other objects thus carried on the cap or elsewhere on the person as preservatives are the image of Lao Tzŭ, or of the Eight Immortals 八仙 *pa hsien*; or of the the character 壽 *shou* longevity, with five bats *fu*, 蝠 (symbol for happiness, punningly for 福 *fu*); or 100 silver badges with *shou* 壽, wishing the child may living 100 years; or the image of sun and moon; or that of a bald, long-bearded old man.

Another way is to tie the hand, foot or neck with red, black or green cord. The knots used may be 72 in number, 36, 28 or 12, signifying the same as in a paragraph above. These cords are also worn by adults.

Boys who are expected to be good at business, or girls who, it is hoped, will be clever at needle-work, wear respectively an abacus 算盤 *suan p'an* and scissors 剪刀 *chien tao* as badges.

The image of the god of smallpox and measles 痘母神 *tou-mu shén*, is taken from door to door in a box by a very disreputable looking person. Women offer to it shoes, rice or money, and then expect their children will not succumb to these diseases. 751 852

Bridges and stone tablets 碑 *pei* are worshipped to gain their protection for children (see chapter on Passing crises); or a willow tree; this is a cheap wood, not much wanted, and the hope is that no spirits will want the child.

The length of time during which a child is suckled is three years. Some of course do not have so long, and a few have a longer time. One man I know, over 70 and very robust, regards his present good health as due to his mother nursing him till he was over six years old. The custom of three years of mourning for a parent is based on this three years' nursing. 853

As to infanticide, 丟兒溺女 *tiu êrh ni nü*: if male children are thrown out it is generally because they are illegitimate. Girls are drowned or starved by both rich and poor; by the rich, it is said, even more than by the poor. The rich suppose that a disproportionate number of girls shows the family stock is degenerating; the poor destroy 847

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847 their girls because they are unable to support them. It is impossible to get enough information to make a reliable estimate of illegitimate births and infanticides, but it is certain that both are very numerous among both rich and poor.

754 791 When a person falls sick a quack doctor may make him believe that his spirit has already departed and entered into a certain pregnant woman, and that the only hope for his life is to curse this woman and make her miscarry. This is done by the 胎術 *t'ai shu*, womb black art. Generally a witch is called in; she takes an egg and recites over it an incantation somewhat as follows: "If the spirit has gone south the south precinct god 土地神 *t'u ti shên* will bring it back; if to the north, the north precinct god will do the same," etc. The egg is then put in hot ashes, and if it spurts in any direction the spirit is called back from that quarter with the usual ceremonies. Persons known as *shuan t'ai-ti* 拴胎的 are called in for the purpose of counteracting this black art.

845 It is believed that deformed and maimed births 腦精瞎怪 *ch'üeh ching hsin kuai*, are the outcome of sin, whether of adultery or of irregular intercourse as to time or place.